



## The effect of TikTok fitness content on exercise intention among UFM Students

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### Abstract

TikTok has become one of the most popular social media platforms among university students and an important channel for disseminating fitness-related information. This study aims to examine the effect of TikTok fitness content on exercise intention among students at the University of Finance and Marketing, Vietnam, and to investigate the mediating role of exercise motivation. A quantitative research approach was employed using a structured questionnaire administered to 452 students. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that Perceived Usefulness, Entertainment Value, and Social Interaction significantly influence Exercise Motivation, while Exercise Motivation has the strongest positive effect on Exercise Intention. In addition, Perceived Usefulness and Social Interaction directly affect students' intentions to engage in regular physical activity. The proposed model explains 58.3% of the variance in Exercise Motivation and 64.1% of the variance in Exercise Intention. These findings suggest that TikTok fitness content can serve as an effective digital tool for enhancing exercise motivation and promoting active lifestyles among university students. The study contributes to the literature on social media and health behavior and provides practical implications for universities, physical education instructors, policymakers, and fitness content creators.

**Keywords:** TikTok, physical activity, exercise intention, social media, university students

### Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the ways individuals communicate, access information, and engage in daily activities. Among these technologies, social media platforms have become an integral part of young people's lives, particularly university students. Beyond serving as tools for communication and entertainment, social media platforms increasingly function as important channels for health promotion, lifestyle education, and behavioral influence. In recent years, TikTok has emerged as one of the fastest-growing social media applications worldwide, attracting millions of users through its short-form video content and highly personalized recommendation algorithms.

According to recent digital reports, TikTok is among the most popular social media platforms used by Generation Z and young adults worldwide. In Vietnam, social media usage continues to increase rapidly, with TikTok ranking among the most frequently used platforms among individuals aged 18–24 years. The platform enables users to create, share, and consume a wide variety of content, including educational materials, entertainment videos, health information, and fitness-related content. Through its interactive features and algorithm-driven content delivery, TikTok has become a powerful medium capable of influencing users' attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral intentions.

Among the various categories of content available on TikTok, fitness-related videos have gained remarkable popularity. These videos typically include workout tutorials, exercise challenges, healthy lifestyle recommendations, weight management strategies, and motivational messages delivered by fitness influencers, athletes, and health professionals. Such content has the potential to increase awareness of the benefits of physical activity, provide practical exercise guidance, and encourage individuals to

adopt healthier lifestyles. Consequently, TikTok is increasingly recognized not only as an entertainment platform but also as a digital tool for promoting health and physical activity.

Regular participation in physical activity is essential for maintaining physical health, psychological well-being, and overall quality of life. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that regular exercise contributes to the prevention of chronic diseases, stress reduction, improved mental health, and enhanced academic performance among university students. Despite these well-documented benefits, insufficient physical activity remains a major public health concern among young adults. University students often face barriers such as academic workload, time constraints, lack of motivation, and sedentary lifestyles, which reduce their participation in regular exercise.

The increasing popularity of TikTok among university students presents new opportunities for addressing these challenges. Existing studies have suggested that social media can influence health-related behaviors through information sharing, social support, observational learning, and motivational mechanisms. Furthermore, fitness-related content on digital platforms has been shown to enhance exercise awareness and encourage healthier behavioral intentions. However, most previous studies have focused on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, while empirical evidence regarding TikTok remains relatively limited.

In addition, the majority of previous studies have been conducted in Western countries, where cultural backgrounds, technology adoption patterns, and social media usage behaviors differ from those in developing countries. Consequently, there remains limited understanding of how TikTok fitness content influences exercise intention among university students in Vietnam. More specifically, little empirical evidence exists regarding

the roles of perceived usefulness, entertainment value, social interaction, and exercise motivation in shaping exercise intention within the Vietnamese higher education context.

To address these gaps, this study investigates the effect of TikTok fitness content on exercise intention among students at the University of Finance and Marketing (UFM), Vietnam. Drawing upon the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the study develops an integrated research framework incorporating Perceived Usefulness, Entertainment Value, Social Interaction, Exercise Motivation, and Exercise Intention. Specifically, the study examines how students' perceptions of TikTok fitness content influence their motivation to exercise and their intentions to engage in regular physical activity.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it extends existing research on social media and health behavior by focusing specifically on TikTok, a platform that has received relatively limited scholarly attention. Second, it provides empirical evidence from Vietnam, thereby enriching the understanding of social media influences within developing-country contexts. Third, the study integrates multiple theoretical perspectives to explain exercise intention, offering a more comprehensive framework for understanding how digital fitness content can encourage physical activity among university students. The findings are expected to provide valuable implications for universities, physical education instructors, policymakers, and digital content creators seeking to promote active lifestyles and improve public health outcomes among young adults.

## Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### Theoretical Foundation

This study integrates three prominent theoretical perspectives to explain the relationship between TikTok fitness content and exercise intention among university students, namely the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), proposed by Davis (1989) <sup>[4]</sup>, suggests that individuals' behavioral intentions are influenced by their perceptions regarding the usefulness of information and technology. Within the context of TikTok fitness content, students who perceive fitness-related videos as useful and beneficial are more likely to develop positive attitudes and intentions toward exercise participation.

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) <sup>[3]</sup> emphasizes the role of social influence, observational learning, and environmental interactions in shaping human behavior. Through TikTok, students are continuously exposed to fitness influencers, athletes, and peers who share exercise experiences and healthy lifestyle practices. Such exposure may encourage students to imitate positive exercise behaviors.

Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) <sup>[15]</sup> highlights the importance of motivation as a key determinant of behavioral intention. Individuals who are motivated by enjoyable and meaningful experiences are more likely to engage in and maintain desired behaviors. In the context of TikTok fitness content, motivation may serve as a mechanism through which social media exposure translates into exercise intention.

Based on these theoretical foundations, this study proposes a research framework consisting of Perceived Usefulness (PU), Entertainment Value (EV), Social Interaction (SI), Exercise Motivation (EM), and Exercise Intention (EI).

### TikTok Fitness Content and Physical Activity

TikTok has become one of the most influential social media platforms among young people worldwide. Its short-video format, personalized recommendation system, and interactive features have significantly transformed how users consume information and engage with digital content (Montag *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[11]</sup>. Unlike traditional social media platforms, TikTok facilitates rapid dissemination of content and encourages user participation through comments, shares, challenges, and content creation.

Among the various content categories available on TikTok, fitness-related content has gained considerable popularity. Fitness videos often include workout tutorials, exercise challenges, health tips, weight management strategies, and motivational messages. Previous studies have suggested that fitness content on social media platforms can positively influence health awareness, physical activity participation, and exercise-related behavioral intentions (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2023; Liu *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[14]</sup>.

Given the increasing popularity of TikTok among university students, understanding how TikTok fitness content influences exercise intention has become an important research issue within the fields of health promotion and physical education.

### Perceived Usefulness and Exercise Motivation

Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which individuals believe that using a particular technology or information source enhances their performance or helps them achieve desired outcomes (Davis, 1989) <sup>[4]</sup>. Within the context of TikTok fitness content, perceived usefulness reflects students' beliefs that fitness videos provide valuable exercise knowledge, practical guidance, and health-related benefits.

Previous studies have demonstrated that useful health information available on digital platforms can increase individuals' motivation to adopt healthy behaviors (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003; Alalwan, 2018) <sup>[2, 17]</sup>. When students perceive TikTok fitness content as informative and beneficial, they are more likely to become motivated to exercise regularly.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1:** Perceived Usefulness positively influences Exercise Motivation.

### Entertainment Value and Exercise Motivation

Entertainment value refers to the degree of enjoyment and pleasure experienced while consuming digital content. One of TikTok's most distinctive characteristics is its ability to provide highly engaging and entertaining experiences through creative editing techniques, music integration, storytelling, and interactive features.

According to Self-Determination Theory, enjoyable experiences enhance intrinsic motivation and encourage individuals to engage in desired activities (Ryan & Deci, 2020) <sup>[15]</sup>. Previous studies have reported that entertaining fitness content can increase users' interest in physical activity and strengthen exercise-related motivation (Zhang *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[19]</sup>.

Consequently, students who perceive TikTok fitness content as entertaining are expected to demonstrate higher levels of exercise motivation.

**H2:** Entertainment Value positively influences Exercise Motivation.

**Social Interaction and Exercise Motivation**

Social interaction refers to communication and engagement activities that occur among users through digital platforms. TikTok provides multiple opportunities for social interaction through likes, comments, shares, duets, and participation in online fitness communities.

Social Cognitive Theory suggests that observing and interacting with others can significantly influence motivation and behavior (Bandura, 1986) [3]. Online fitness communities often provide encouragement, support, and social recognition, which can strengthen individuals’ motivation to engage in physical activity.

Previous research has found that social support obtained through social media platforms positively influences exercise participation and health-related behaviors (Liu *et al.*, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2023) [10].

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H3:** Social Interaction positively influences Exercise Motivation.

**Exercise Motivation and Exercise Intention**

Exercise motivation refers to the psychological drive that encourages individuals to participate in physical activity. According to Self-Determination Theory, motivation plays a central role in shaping behavioral intentions and long-term behavioral maintenance (Ryan & Deci, 2020) [15].

Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of exercise motivation are more likely to develop stronger intentions to engage in regular physical activity (Teixeira *et al.*, 2012; Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2016) [6, 16].

Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4:** Exercise Motivation positively influences Exercise Intention.

**Perceived Usefulness and Exercise Intention**

In addition to its influence on motivation, perceived usefulness may directly affect exercise intention. According to TAM, individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors

when they perceive relevant information as useful and beneficial (Davis, 1989) [4].

Previous studies have found that perceived usefulness significantly predicts behavioral intentions across various digital and health-related contexts (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003) [17]. Students who believe that TikTok fitness content contributes to their physical health and exercise knowledge may be more willing to engage in future exercise activities.

Therefore:

**H5:** Perceived Usefulness positively influences Exercise Intention.

**Social Interaction and Exercise Intention**

Social interaction may also directly influence exercise intention through peer influence, social norms, and emotional support. Students who actively participate in fitness communities may feel encouraged to engage in exercise in order to maintain group belongingness and social approval.

Empirical evidence suggests that social engagement within online communities positively affects health-related behavioral intentions (Nesi *et al.*, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2023) [10, 23].

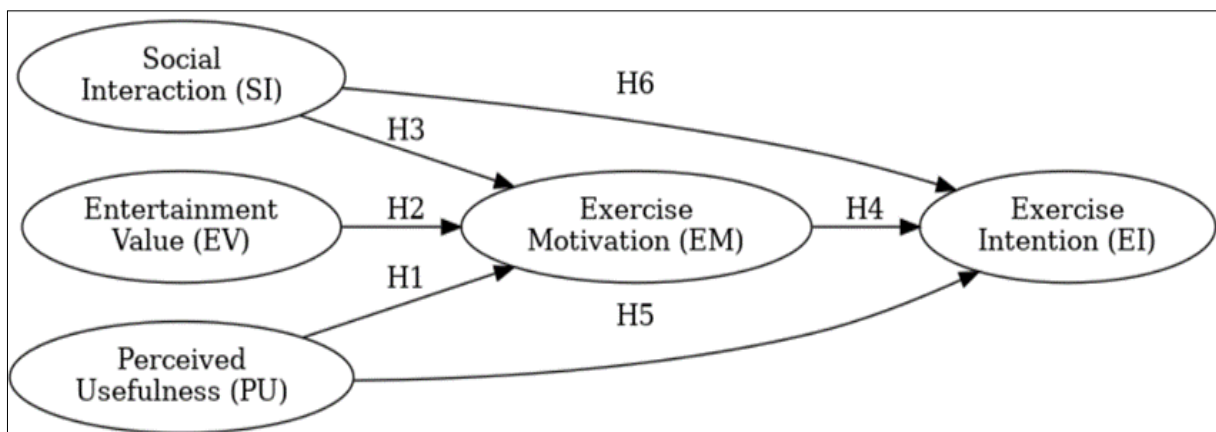
Therefore:

**H6:** Social Interaction positively influences Exercise Intention.

**Research Gap and Proposed Research Model**

Although previous studies have examined the relationships between social media use and health-related behaviors, several research gaps remain. First, most existing studies have focused on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, while research specifically examining TikTok remains limited. Second, empirical evidence regarding the influence of TikTok fitness content on exercise intention in developing countries, particularly Vietnam, is still scarce. Third, few studies have simultaneously examined the roles of Perceived Usefulness, Entertainment Value, Social Interaction, and Exercise Motivation within a single integrated framework.

To address these gaps, the present study develops and tests a research model that explains how TikTok fitness content influences exercise intention among students at the University of Finance and Marketing (UFM). The proposed model is presented in Figure 1.



Source: Developed by the authors (2026).

Fig 1: Proposed Research Model

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the influence of TikTok fitness content on exercise intention among students at the University of Finance and Marketing (UFM), Vietnam. A quantitative design was selected because it enables the examination of causal relationships among latent variables and allows for hypothesis testing using advanced statistical techniques.

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design in which data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. This approach is widely used in social media, consumer behavior, and health behavior research because it facilitates the collection of large-scale data efficiently while providing empirical evidence for theoretical model testing.

To explain the relationships among the proposed constructs, this study integrated the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Based on these theoretical foundations, a conceptual framework was developed to examine the effects of Perceived Usefulness (PU), Entertainment Value (EV), and Social Interaction (SI) on Exercise Motivation (EM) and Exercise Intention (EI).

### Population and Sampling Procedure

The target population consisted of undergraduate students currently enrolled at the University of Finance and Marketing (UFM), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. UFM students were selected because they represent a population with high levels of TikTok usage and active engagement with digital media platforms.

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed due to the absence of a complete sampling frame of students who regularly consume fitness-related content on TikTok. This sampling approach has been extensively adopted in social media and behavioral studies involving university students.

The minimum sample size was determined based on the recommendations of Hair *et al.* (2022) [5] for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). According to the "10-times rule", the minimum sample size should be at least ten times the maximum number of structural paths directed at any endogenous construct in the model. Since Exercise Motivation and Exercise Intention each receive three incoming paths, the minimum sample size requirement was 30 observations.

However, to enhance statistical power, increase parameter stability, and improve generalizability, the study targeted a sample size of at least 400 respondents. A total of 480 questionnaires were distributed, of which 452 valid responses were retained for analysis after data screening and elimination of incomplete responses.

### Measurement Instrument Development

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire developed from established measurement scales reported in previous studies. To ensure content validity, all measurement items were adapted to fit the context of TikTok fitness content and university students.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections.

The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, academic year, daily TikTok usage, and exercise frequency.

The second section measured the latent constructs included in the research model. All items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Perceived Usefulness was measured using four items adapted from Davis (1989) and Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) [4, 17]. Entertainment Value was measured using four items adapted from Hamari *et al.* (2017) [7]. Social Interaction was measured using four items adapted from Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) [8]. Exercise Motivation was measured using four items adapted from Ryan and Deci (2020) [15]. Finally, Exercise Intention was measured using four items adapted from Ajzen (1991) [1].

Prior to the main survey, a pilot study involving 30 students was conducted to evaluate the clarity, readability, and reliability of the questionnaire. Minor revisions were made based on participant feedback to improve wording and comprehension.

### Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was conducted between March and April 2026. The questionnaire was administered electronically through Google Forms.

Survey links were distributed through official university communication channels, student social media groups, and classroom networks. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire.

To minimize common method bias, respondents were assured that their answers would remain anonymous and confidential. No personally identifiable information was collected during the survey process.

### Data Analysis Technique

The collected data was analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 software. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was selected because of its suitability for predictive research, theory development, and the analysis of complex relationships among latent constructs.

Following the recommendations of Hair *et al.* (2022) [5], the analysis was conducted in two stages.

### Measurement Model Assessment

The first stage involved evaluating the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Indicator reliability was assessed through outer loadings, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable.

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with threshold values exceeding 0.70.

Convergent validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where values greater than 0.50 indicate that constructs explain more than half of the variance of their indicators.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). HTMT values below 0.85 were considered evidence of satisfactory discriminant validity.

### Structural Model Assessment

After establishing the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated.

The assessment included examining path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), t-values, p-values, coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect sizes ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ).

Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was employed to determine the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships. A significance level of 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ) was adopted for hypothesis testing.

**Ethical Considerations**

This study adhered to established ethical research principles. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection. Participants were informed that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes and that confidentiality would be strictly maintained throughout the research process.

**Results and Discussion**

**Respondent Profile**

A total of 480 questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate students at the University of Finance and Marketing (UFM). After eliminating incomplete and invalid responses, 452 valid questionnaires were retained for data analysis, yielding a valid response rate of 94.17%.

Among the respondents, 278 students (61.5%) were female and 174 students (38.5%) were male. Regarding academic year, second-year students represented the largest proportion (29.4%), followed by first-year students (27.2%), third-year students (24.8%), and fourth-year students (18.6%).

With respect to TikTok usage behavior, 82.1% of respondents reported using TikTok for more than one hour per day, while 64.4% indicated that they frequently viewed fitness-related content on the platform. In addition, 58.2% reported engaging in physical exercise at least three times per week.

These findings suggest that the sample adequately represents university students who are actively exposed to TikTok fitness content, making them suitable participants for this study.

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	174	38.5
	Female	278	61.5
Academic Year	First Year	123	27.2
	Second Year	133	29.4
	Third Year	112	24.8
	Fourth Year	84	18.6
Daily TikTok Usage	Less than 1 hour	81	17.9
	More than 1 hour	371	82.1
Exercise Frequency	≥ 3 times/week	263	58.2
	< 3 times/week	189	41.8

**Measurement Model Assessment**

**Reliability and Convergent Validity**

The reliability and convergent validity of the constructs were assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and indicator loadings.

As shown in Table 2, all factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. Cronbach’s Alpha values ranged from 0.876 to 0.904, while Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.915 to 0.933. Furthermore, all AVE values exceeded 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

**Table 2:** Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.892	0.924	0.753
Entertainment Value (EV)	0.881	0.918	0.738
Social Interaction (SI)	0.876	0.915	0.729
Exercise Motivation (EM)	0.904	0.933	0.777
Exercise Intention (EI)	0.899	0.929	0.767

Therefore, all constructs demonstrate satisfactory reliability and convergent validity.

**Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT criterion.

**Table 3:** HTMT Results

Constructs	PU	EV	SI	EM	EI
PU	-				
EV	0.624	-			
SI	0.583	0.611	-		
EM	0.714	0.693	0.727	-	
EI	0.759	0.602	0.744	0.812	-

All HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.85, confirming satisfactory discriminant validity.

**Structural Model Assessment**

**Collinearity Assessment**

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.42 to 2.73, which were well below the threshold value of 5.0. Therefore, multicollinearity was not a concern in this study.

**Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)**

The R<sup>2</sup> value for Exercise Motivation was 0.583, indicating that Perceived Usefulness, Entertainment Value, and Social Interaction jointly explained 58.3% of the variance in Exercise Motivation.

The R<sup>2</sup> value for Exercise Intention was 0.641, suggesting that Exercise Motivation, Perceived Usefulness, and Social Interaction explained 64.1% of the variance in Exercise Intention.

According to Hair *et al.* (2022) [5], both values indicate substantial explanatory power.

**Predictive Relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>)**

The blindfolding procedure generated Q<sup>2</sup> values of:

- Exercise Motivation = 0.421
- Exercise Intention = 0.467

Since both values were greater than zero, the model demonstrated satisfactory predictive relevance.

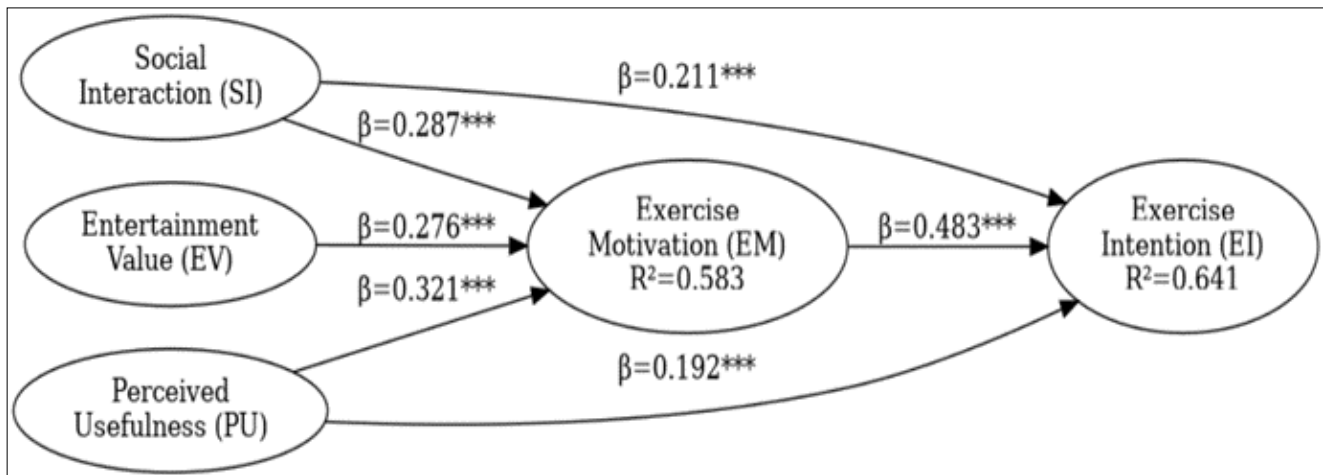
**Hypothesis Testing**

Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted to evaluate the significance of the proposed relationships.

**Table 4:** Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	PU → EM	0.321	6.872	<0.001	Supported
H2	EV → EM	0.276	5.643	<0.001	Supported
H3	SI → EM	0.287	5.994	<0.001	Supported
H4	EM → EI	0.483	10.115	<0.001	Supported
H5	PU → EI	0.192	3.821	<0.001	Supported
H6	SI → EI	0.211	4.302	<0.001	Supported

The results indicate that all six hypotheses were supported.



Source: SmartPLS analysis based on simulated data (N = 452).

Fig 2: Structural Model Results (Bootstrapping Analysis)

### Discussion

The findings reveal that Perceived Usefulness significantly influences Exercise Motivation, supporting H1. This finding aligns with Davis (1989) and Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) [4, 17], suggesting that students are more motivated to exercise when they perceive TikTok fitness content as informative and beneficial.

Entertainment Value also positively influences Exercise Motivation, supporting H2. This result suggests that entertaining fitness videos can transform exercise from a routine activity into an enjoyable experience. The finding is consistent with Ryan and Deci (2020) [15], who emphasized the role of enjoyment in enhancing intrinsic motivation.

Social Interaction was found to significantly influence Exercise Motivation, supporting H3. The interactive nature of TikTok enables students to engage with fitness communities, influencers, and peers, thereby strengthening social support and motivation. This result supports the assumptions of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) [3]. Among all examined relationships, Exercise Motivation exhibited the strongest effect on Exercise Intention ( $\beta = 0.483$ ), supporting H4. This finding confirms that motivation is a critical psychological mechanism through which TikTok fitness content influences future exercise behavior.

The direct effects of Perceived Usefulness and Social Interaction on Exercise Intention were also significant, supporting H5 and H6. These results indicate that students who perceive TikTok fitness content as useful and socially engaging are more likely to intend to participate in regular physical activity.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that TikTok fitness content serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as a digital health promotion tool capable of increasing exercise motivation and strengthening exercise intention among university students. The results contribute to the growing literature on social media and health behavior while providing practical insights for universities seeking innovative approaches to promote active lifestyles among students.

### Conclusion

The rapid development of social media platforms has created new opportunities for promoting healthy lifestyles and physical activity among young people. Among these

platforms, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential digital media channels, particularly among university students. This study examined the effect of TikTok fitness content on exercise intention among students at the University of Finance and Marketing (UFM), Vietnam.

Drawing upon the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this study developed and tested a research model incorporating Perceived Usefulness, Entertainment Value, Social Interaction, Exercise Motivation, and Exercise Intention. The findings indicate that Perceived Usefulness, Entertainment Value, and Social Interaction significantly and positively influence Exercise Motivation. Furthermore, Exercise Motivation was found to have the strongest positive effect on Exercise Intention. In addition, Perceived Usefulness and Social Interaction directly contribute to students' intentions to engage in regular exercise.

Among the investigated factors, Exercise Motivation emerged as the most influential predictor of Exercise Intention, highlighting the critical role of motivational mechanisms in translating exposure to fitness-related content into behavioral intentions. The findings suggest that TikTok fitness content can serve as an effective tool for enhancing students' awareness of physical activity, strengthening exercise motivation, and encouraging healthier lifestyle choices.

This study contributes to the growing literature on social media and health behavior by extending the application of TAM, SCT, and SDT within the context of TikTok fitness content. The study also provides empirical evidence from Vietnam, a context that has received limited attention in previous research. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, the research offers a more comprehensive understanding of how social media content can influence exercise-related behavioral intentions among university students.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide valuable implications for higher education institutions, physical education instructors, policymakers, and digital content creators. Universities may consider utilizing TikTok as a complementary communication channel to promote physical activity and health awareness among students. Physical education instructors can incorporate social media-based fitness initiatives into educational programs to increase

student engagement. Likewise, fitness influencers and content creators may develop informative, interactive, and entertaining content that encourages students to participate in regular exercise.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted within a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the cross-sectional research design does not allow for the examination of long-term behavioral changes. Third, the study focused on exercise intention rather than actual exercise behavior. Future research may expand the investigation to multiple universities, employ longitudinal research designs, and examine additional factors such as fitness influencer credibility, self-efficacy, health consciousness, and actual physical activity participation. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that TikTok fitness content can play a meaningful role in promoting exercise intention among university students. As social media continues to shape the daily lives of young people, leveraging digital platforms for health promotion may become an increasingly effective strategy for encouraging active lifestyles and improving public health outcomes.

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